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June 22, 2015

Council President Herb Wesson
City of Los Angeles
200 N. Spring Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Dear Council President Wesson,

On behalf of the LA Fashion District BID, which represents 1000+ property owners and over 3000 businesses, we are asking you to consider a number of problems with the proposed sidewalk vending program.

First, attached are photos of actual illegal vending going on in our district every day. The aerial shots show you that illegal vendors set up on the sidewalks directly in front of closed and opened stores and often block the streets, filling the streets and alleys. The other photos demonstrate the types of vendors we encounter including illegal animal vending, counterfeit items, food and retail inventory. In addition to placing their merchandise on the sidewalk they also often place ice chests, chairs, tables, and umbrellas.

We also have 70-90 food trucks in the district. This program is legal, but I would note that the City has no regulatory control over the number and location of truck vendors or hours of operation. So, residents, retailers and restaurants suffer through significant noise, substantial odors and remaining trash associated with both types of vendor. The business and residential community have no chance to comment or express their concerns the way they would with a permitted event, store or restaurant.

Our experience with the legal and illegal vending occurring in our district has shown a growing level of public safety concerns for pedestrians as they navigate very crowded, narrow and often times, damaged sidewalks. On some blocks there are as many as 7 mobile food trucks, leaving little room for proposed sidewalk vending. The City already pays millions of dollars on claims for slip and falls – allowing more hazards would only add to the liability of the City, the BID and the property owner.

The City cannot enforce the illegal sidewalk vendors now. In fact, the Fashion District paid close to \$18,000 in the past year to the Bureau of Street Services so that they could enforce the regulations on a few Saturdays.

The property owners and businesses in our district pay an assessment on their properties to pay for services above and beyond what the City provides. One of those services is pedestrian litter and trash removal. Currently, we are picking up 6 tons of trash a day and paying over \$1 million per year to remove trash! Sidewalk vendors do not pay into the BID and do not contribute to the BID, yet leave trash on the sidewalks and streets.

If sidewalk vending is to become legal please consider the following:

- Neighborhoods should have to opt-in to the program to allow sidewalk vending.

- Sidewalk vendors must be required to have liability insurance and permit fees that cover the costs of full enforcement by the City.
- Sidewalk vendors must not be allowed to operate in front of a business or a mobile food truck.
- There must be a limit to the number of permits the City allows for sidewalk vending.
- There must be a limit to the number of sidewalk vendors allowed on one block and that number must include consideration of existing food trucks
- There must be fees associated with litter and trash removal.

Downtown has become a robust, pedestrian friendly area, with a range of goods at all price points. If we want more street level retail to work in downtown, the sidewalk has to work for the retailers. We need to provide clean, accessible and safe sidewalks. Food odors and sidewalks blocked by vendors (some of whom are selling the same items as those in the store or restaurant) do not help to support those businesses. Brick and mortar business are the lifeblood of vibrant and walkable streets, we should be doing things that will make it easier for them to stay in business not impede their efforts, which sidewalk vending will do.

Sincerely,



Kent Smith

Executive Director

cc: LA City Council